NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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DAVID LENT/JOHANNESBURG

SOWETO BI-ELECTION PROSPECTS

ANNCR:

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS RELEASED SOME DETAINEES AND TAKEN SOME OTHER STEPS REGARDED AS IMPROVING CHANCES OF HOLDING SUCCESSFULBI-ELECTIONS NEXT MONTH FOR A SOWETO COMMUNITY COUNCIL LEADING TO LOCAL AUTONOMY. VOA'S DAVID LENT HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM JOHANNESBURG.

VOICE:

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT STAGED COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS LAST MONTH IN SOWETO -- THE HUGE BLACK COMMUNITY OUTSIDE JOHANNESBURG. AND BY ALL STANDARDS THEY WERE A FAILURE. VOTING TOOK PLACE IN ONLY TWO OF SOWETO'S THIRTY WARDS. IN NINE OTHERS, CANDIDATES WERE UNOPPOSED AND ELECTED AUTOMATICALLY. IN THE TWO WARDS WITH A CONTEST, LESS THAN SIX PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS CAST BALLOTS.

FOLLOWING THE ABORTIVE FEBRUARY BALLOTING, DOCTOR CONNIE MULDER, SOUTH AFRICA'S MINISTER OF PLURAL RELATIONS OR BLACK AFFAIRS, SAID THE STATUS OF THE BANNED COMMITTEE OF TEN AND ITS DETAINED MEMBERS WOULD HAVE TO BE CLARIFIED BEFORE BI-ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD.

THE COMMITTEE OF TEN WAS FORMED BY PROMINENT SOWETO LEADERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO FILL A LEADERSHIP VOID AFTER A GOVERNMENT BACKED GROUP WAS FORCED BY MILITANT STUDENTS TO DISBAND LAST AUGUST,. THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN WAS DETAINED DURING THE GOVERNMENT CRACK DOWN LAST OCTOBER.

DOCTOR MULDER SET BI-ELECTIONS FOR APRIL FIFTEEN. THE DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS RUNS OUT NEXT TUESDAY. LAST WEEK

MINISTER OF JUSTICE JAMES KRUGER RELEASED TEN DETAINEES INCLUDING TWO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN. THEN, THURSDAY EVENING, THE MINISTER RELEASED ANOTHER THREE DETAINEES, TWO OF THEM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN, INCLUDING ITS CHAIRMAN DOCTOR NTHATO MOTLANA. SIX MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE REMAIN IN DETENTION. MINISTER KRUGER HAS SAID DECISIONS ON LAST OCTOBER'S DETENTIONS ARE BEING REVIEWED AND THAT THE COUNCIL ELECTIONS WOULD NOT INFLUENCE THE DECISION.

THE COMMITTEE OF TEN BEFORE ITS BANNING AND THE JAILING OF ITS MEMBERS LAST OCTOBER CALLED FOR FULL AUTONOMY FOR THE HUGE BLACK TOWNSHIP. WITH MORE THAN ONE MILLION TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND INHABITANTS SOWETO IS REGARDED AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ALL BLACK COMMUNITY.

(OPT) THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT LAST MONTH PLEDGED TO GIVE SOWETO FULL AUTONOMY IN LOCAL AFFAIRS. ON FRIDAY, THE RIGHT OF CENTER JOHANNESBURG NEWSPAPER "THE CITIZEN," DETAINED WHAT IT SAID ARE THE MAJOR POINTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN. ACCORDING TO THE CITIZEN'S REPORT SOWETO'S PROGRESS TOWARD FULL AUTONOMY WILL TAKE PLACE IN FOUR STAGES. ALL ARE PREDICATED ON SUCCESSFUL BI-ELECTIONS AND THE INSTALLATION OF A COMMUNITY COUNCIL IN SOWETO NEXT MONTH.

IN THE FIRST STAGE, THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL WOULD RECEIVE THE RIGHT TO ALLOCATE HOUSES AND LIVING QUARTERS. THIS RIGHT WOULD BE GRANTED SOON AFTER THE BI-ELECTIONS. THE SECOND STAGE WOULD INCLUDE TRANSFER OF CONTROL OF THE WEST RAND ADMINISTRATION BOARD'S BUDGET TO THE SOWETO COMMUNITY COUNCIL. THE BOARD IS THE GOVERNMENT APPOINTED BODY WHICH NOW DETERMINES VIRTUALLY EVERY ASPECT OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMUNITY. "THE CITIZEN" SAYS THE THIRD STAGE OF AUTONOMY AS PROPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT

WOULD TURN OVER CONTROL OF STREET BUILDING, HOSPITALS AND CLINICS TO THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL. AND THE FOURTH STAGE WOULD ALLOW THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL TO IMPOSE TAXES LOCALLY. (END OPT)

IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER DOCTOR MOTLANA AND THE OTHER RELEASED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN WILL DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BI-ELECTIONS. CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELEZI HEAD OF INKATHA -- THE LARGEST BLACK ZULU BASED POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN SOUTH AFRICA -- SAID A DECISION WOULD BE TAKEN AFTER TALKS WITH DOCTOR MOTLANA BUT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOWETO DIVISION OF INKATHA ANNOUNCED THAT HIS GROUP HAD ALREADY DECIDED TO SUPPORT THE BI-ELECTONS.

THE DECISIONS OF THE COMING DAYS AND WEEKS WILL CLEARLY BE IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF SOWETO. AND, INASMUCH AS SOWETO IS SOUTH AFRICA'S BELL WEATHER BLACK COMMUNITY, FOR THE FUTURE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND SOUTH AFRICA'S SIX MILLION URBAN BLACKS.

JS/PY